

Synopsis of The Smart Kid by Bob Miller

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For Agents Only! CAUTION! SPOILER ALERT!

The Smart Kid is a stand-alone novel.

But it is Book 1 in an intended 5 Book Series called *Chrysalis Chronology*.

MICHAEL SHALE doesn't grow.

He suffers from the very real disease with the fictional sounding name of Syndrome X. But his disease is unique: not only doesn't he grow, he also doesn't age.

He was born in 1940. He stopped growing about the age of 12. When he entered college in 1958 he still looked like a sixth-grader. He has a normally aging identical twin brother, MARK SHALE, who does not suffer from the anomaly.

This condition causes Michael to see himself more as a child than the adult that he really is on the inside. He relates to children better. And he usually runs from a fight, not daring to confront adults.

Michael's special condition has caught the attention of SEN. JOHN PERKINS, who was recently appointed to a special military committee to oversee the black budget of ARPA. Due to personal and professional setbacks, he's highly motivated to develop a military idea that will gain him notoriety. The recent death of his wife due to "old age" weighs heavily on his mind. He convinces his committee of the value of developing soldiers that don't age. When the committee's invitations to submit to military testing are rejected by Michael, the committee resorts to conscripting him into national service.

Perkins, acting without the committee's knowledge or consent, uses the FBI to plant false evidence of drug trafficking. Michael is kicked out of college, arrested, drafted, and forced to assist the military by submitting to testing.

Michael is incarcerated in an abandoned military Academy in southern Pennsylvania, where medical tests are performed on him. Desperate for answers, Perkins has Michael's twin brother also captured to compare his DNA.

During his 18-month incarceration, he uses the gymnasium and exercise equipment to develop his physique. This is demonstrated by his failed attempt to climb ropes in the gym when he's first captured, which contrasts with later scenes where he easily manages ropes. And this skill allows him to escape during the final confrontation.

The doctors testing Michael report their findings to Perkins. Michael's anomaly is the result of advanced genetic engineering. Perkins realizes the company responsible is CHRYSALIS CHRONOLOGY, a secretive, silent partner that has been funding the search for Michael Shale, their medical product.

Mark helps his brother to escape from the prison by climbing through a vent which is too small for Mark. Michael gives Mark a special coded message to indicate where Mark will find him hiding, if he ever escapes.

Michael's time in prison is an analogy for his feelings of being trapped in a child's body.

Perkins has a team of corrupt FBI agents who search for Michael but fail to catch him.

Realizing that Mark is only useful as bait, they allow him to escape in order to lead them to his brother.

Michael uses his interest in magic tricks to elude capture over many years. He picks a lock on hand-cuffs after a highway patrol captures him. He uses misdirection to send the FBI agents to the wrong bank, so he can withdraw needed money. He narrowly escapes capture through the help of a family friend, who is also part of the select committee on military defense.

He lives on his own for many years under a variety of fake names, while he waits for his brother to find him hiding out in elementary and middle schools, pretending to be a student. He narrowly escapes capture from an attack at a middle school by jumping into the Arkansas river.

In 1979, he attends an elementary school in St. Cloud, MN as a sixth grader with the name of MATT JANSON. He befriends a new school counselor, CHARLEEN TERRY, who is mourning the recent loss of her husband and eight-year-old son, Max, due to a car accident.

Charleen investigates Matt's history and learns some of his secrets. He has no family, history or home. They develop a friendship.

Michael's interaction with students and staff demonstrate that he has grown to become a forceful protector of students who isn't afraid to confront adults if necessary.

Charleen assists Matt in his mission to save a young girl from abuse and, in return, he agrees to reveal all his secrets to her. He reveals his ability to sound like a middle-aged man. He has used this power over the years to maintain his facade of a family. He also informs Charleen that he's really 39 years old.

At first, Charleen believes Michael, but a number of events cause her to doubt. Her mother puts doubt in her mind because he has offered no proof. Charleen learns that Matt has forged her signature a number of times in order to force her to deal with a student that she has been avoiding for personal reasons. She sees a news bulletin that claims Matt is a lunatic escaped from an mental ward. She decides that she must turn him in to the authorities. They part ways and Matt runs.

Charleen is suspended from her job for having an inappropriate relationship with Matthew.

Matt is chased by pursuers that he believes to be the government agents, but it turns out to be his twin brother, who has finally found him.

When government agents come to the school looking for Matt, Charleen realizes she's made a mistake and goes to his apartment to tell him that she believes him, and that she has come to personal healing through his help.

At the apartment, Matt & Mark share their history with her.

The brothers have come to a crisis point and they argue about whether to continue running, as Michael/Matt desires or to fight back, as Mark suggests. After learning that his mother is still alive, Michael agrees to fight back against Senator Perkins.

They devise a plan to get Perkins to confess, face to face, with Michael/Matt, while he is secretly videotaped at a theater. Once again, Matt has outwitted the Senator. Charleen and Mark secretly record the conversation and the physical confrontation between Matt and the Senator. Matt kicks and punches the Senator before escaping out the back of the theater, where Mark & Charleen are waiting with the videotape.

Michael/Matt has finally come face to face with the person that, ironically, has caused him to develop and grow into a man with physical strength and personal drive and confidence. In his

fight against the Senator, they reach eye level after Michael kicks the Senator to his knees and then, after punching him too, Michael stands above the Senator, in victory over his own demons.

A car chase ensues. Mark leads the agents astray, at first, and crashes into the government vehicles to disable them. Matt & Charleen are secretly trailed by a government agent back to her house. Their car is stolen by two troubled students and it is trailed by the G-men who think they're following Matt & Charleen. Mark also catches up to them, not realizing the car was stolen by teenagers.

A car chase ensues and ends in a gravel quarry where the stolen car crashes and burns (Ford Pinto). The government agents leave, thinking that Michael Shale is dead. Mark believes that his brother is dead, (as do the readers), until Matt & Charleen show up in a taxi with the videotape. Mark gives the tape to a TV news crew that arrives at the scene. The trio leaves, their secret now safe, and the Senator exposed on the TV news.

Michael finally meets his mother again after 15 years.

In the epilogue which describes a scene many years later, Mark & Charleen are married and running a successful counseling center for children. Michael is still young and assists in the counseling by befriending the troubled child patients.

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